A brief overview of CFAST vs FAST vs FASTLite. More information is available on the web page (http://cfast.nist.gov/).

CFAST is the fire model. FAST, FASTLite, FireCAD, FireWalk and all of the other programs are basically data editors. In several of the cases they can also run the model, but what they are running is CFAST.

CFAST is an acronym for the Consolidate model of Fire Growth and Smoke Transport.

When we started the development of these models, we developed the core model first (CFAST). Then we did the GUI front ends (first FASTLite and then the improved FAST) to try to help users make the best use of them. A big difficulty we were trying to overcome were the many minor errors which are easy to make in basic text mode with such complicated interactions.

Two years ago, management cut everything except the core model development. We were caught in the transition from the workstation based GUIs to the windows platform. If you will look carefully, you will see that the controls, widgets and so on, you will notice that they are in the Motif style of programming.

From 1998 onward, while we made significant improvements in the kernel, CFAST, we did no development of the front end. There was an expectation at that point that one of the newer front ends, such as FireWalk or FireCAD would be a suitable replacement. The improvements in the model are embodied in version 4.0.1, and are Windows Applications and will run under all versions of Windows. When the subject of providing a GUI for this version surfaced, we did one: FAST, since the other possibilities had not emerged by that point.

The problem we encountered is that as we moved forward in development, we changed the compilers we were using to the next (present) generation and it involves a great deal of code change. The change to Windows drivers from the cross-platform drivers in 3.1.6 and earlier was dramatic, most especially the run-time graphics. Thus, we choose to release the data editor for CFAST 4 without the "run" capability.

You can get the latest model which includes the full featured GUI (FAST); it is version 3.1.6. Keep in mind that up to this point, the programs are DOS based, so they will run under 3.1, 3.11, 95, 98, 2000 and Me, but not under NT.